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Prof. em. Dr. Robert H. Gassmann; Euelstrasse 76; CH-8408 Winterthur; Switzerland

E-Mail: sag.editor@aoi.uzh.ch / Internet: www.sagw.ch/asiengesellschaft

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“quasi” kommt. Solche kleinen Wertungen schleichen sich immer wieder in den Text, sie fallen aber nicht ins Gewicht, denn die Originalzitate sprechen weitgehend für sich. Schliesslich bleibt zu erwähnen, dass das Werk gut redigiert wurde; kleine Fehler wie die Verdoppelung des Wortes “the” auf Seite 108 sind bemerkenswert selten. Insgesamt legt Georg Lehner hiermit ein faszinierendes Pionierwerk in einem Forschungsgebiet vor, in dem noch viele Entdeckungen zu machen sind.

Marc Winter

LORGE, Peter (ed.): *Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms*. Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2011. ix + pp. 252. ISBN: 978-9-629-96418-4.

The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907–960) accounts for a less than popular period for historians on imperial China. Even though the Tang-Song transition has attracted some recent attention (Bol, 1992; Qiu, 1999; Dai, 2010), the decades that link the two dynasties have been by and large considered as either anomalous or irrelevant. This neglect may be explained by two factors: first, as a time of political disunion between the Tang and Song dynasties, this era is relatively short and multi-polar to the point of impeding analytical patterns that tend to appeal to most historians. Second, the lamentable fact that the constant disorder that dominated the period has left only a limited number of source materials, in particular in comparison with the abundance of both official and unofficial documents from the Tang and Song, further increases the difficulty of inquiry.

The book under review, edited by Peter Lorge, represents a collective effort of scholars at the forefront of Chinese history to explore this turbulent era, focusing on the coherence of different polities and “advancing the overall understanding of the period as a whole” (p. 4). Challenging the traditional view shaped by Song historians such as Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1172), who condemned the period as an interregnum of cultural darkness and moral degeneration, this volume acknowledges that many trends in the Tang continued through the Five Dynasties and well into the Song. This emphasis on the importance and meaning of this period furnishes the main contents of the introduction and concluding chapter of the work. These two chapters successfully demonstrate that the multi-centered power configuration deprived the era of a uniform culture under a

single sovereign, but that the decentralized political power across China produced a catalyst for cultural and social transformations, such that “culture flourished because it was not unified” (Lorge, p. 5). Thus, what we identify today as Song culture had to some extent evolved gradually by integrating local elements created by the lack of central authority.

The remaining six chapters by various authors are highly diverse, not only in discipline, but also in scope. The essays can be roughly divided into three groups. Naomi Standen and Johannes Kurz examine the historical evaluation of two political figures. Through an analysis of the shifting roles of Zhao Dejun 趙德鈞 (d. 937), a military governor active in the northern border zone during the early Five Dynasties, Standen focuses her discussion on the issue of loyalty. Arguing against the traditional view that condemns Zhao as disloyal for his repeated change of masters, Standen calls for a different understanding in the Five Dynasties, recovering a more vivid picture of the era during which people often faced a variety of alternatives and then made choices in response to specific situations (p. 19–20). Another figure, Han Xizai 韓熙載 (902–970), who was widely seen as a talented and ambitious official whose aims were thwarted by material distractions, becomes the subject of Kurz’s essay. While previous scholarship has been overwhelmingly concentrated on Han’s hedonistic lifestyle, Kurz turns to Han’s political career to suggest that his eccentric and extravagant private life serves as an emblem of an uncertain time, when swift political changes frequently threatened status and privileges. In fact, Han’s behavior is “not very different from that of some his colleagues” (p. 93).

Hugh R. Clark and Ruth Mostern expound in their papers local politics during the period. In his chapter on the social origins of the founders of the southern regimes, Clark argues that the upheaval of the late Tang provided circumstances that empowered scoundrels to vie for political power. It is interesting to note that most of the southern rulers, as Clark points out, do not fit into the model of banditry developed by Robert Somers (1979) in his study of the origins of military strongmen in the late Tang. Indeed, most of these rulers did not become “outlaws” as a result of injustice, but were merely rogues or refugees “driven by an interest in self-aggrandizement and survival” (p. 70). Adopting a broader perspective, Mostern surveys the local administration by picturing the gradual rise of regional autonomies during the late Tang up until the reassertion of a centralized geography during the early Song. Her arguments that developments in this transitional stage played a key role in the process may be a sufficient supplement for readers of her recently published monograph (Mostern, 2011).

The third cluster of chapters by two art historians centers around the cultural continuity and diversity of the period. De-nin Lee analyses the murals from a Khitan tomb at Baoshan 寶山 in Inner Mongolia and incorporates them into the history of painting to illustrate how painting as a form of culture extended to the periphery of China proper. Advocating a relinquishment of long-held art historical tropes, Lee suggests a term “painting of the long tenth century” instead of “Five Dynasties painting” to “better capture the heterogeneity that reigned in the art of the long tenth century” (p. 118). In a stellar essay with copious illustrations, Tracy Miller studies timber-framed temple constructions in Shanxi and compares them with south-eastern examples, resonating with Nancy Shatzman Steinhardt’s (2011) strenuous efforts to explore architectural traditions in the Liao. By tracking the use of different architectural styles, Miller proposes to pay attention to the “regions of cultural influence and exchange that were not equivalent to dynastic borders” (p. 167), which can help deepen our understanding of contemporary local communities in the historical context.

By way of such interdisciplinary approaches, *The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* adds substantially to the scholarship on this period. Although traditional Chinese historiography has conventionally overlooked the tenth-century, this book offers nuanced portraits of the era, which is to be understood as a dynamic period both continuous with the Tang and the Song. The chapters make a case against trying to generalize about this period and demonstrate that a much more diverse and vivid historical picture can be reached by re-reading historical records in a new context and making use of the ever-growing corpus of archaeological findings. Peter Lorge deserves credit not only for bringing together such a fine group of scholars to contribute to this volume, but also for arguing, quite innovatively, that the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms periods did not really end until the establishment of a new imperial culture during the third reign of the Song (p. 238). This will, without doubt, inspire further research on the period.

Unlike many edited collections of articles, this book does not have its origin in a conference. As a consequence, there is an obvious lack of joint engagement with an overarching topic since the authors seem to concentrate more on addressing specific aspects in their own discipline than in composing an interdisciplinary inquiry into the tenth century. The chapter by Tracy Miller, for instance, deals with issues in the history of Chinese architecture without trying to distinguish the influence of the Khitan and the Han-Chinese, a question which

has already been long noticed by other scholars.¹ De-nin Lee, in a similar vein, seems more intent on criticizing existing studies of Chinese painting for not taking into account materials from the tomb she examines; but he shows little interest for such questions as to how the murals might help us to better comprehend the culture and society of the Khitan. Furthermore, a more extensive picture of the period might be drawn, if the differences between the “Northern Dynasties” and the “Southern Kingdoms” were considered in a more comparative way, such as in the case of Zhao Dejun and Han Xizai. Both Zhao and Han had changed their political loyalties, but Song historians mostly criticized Han for an eccentric lifestyle, while his loyalty was considered less of a problem when compared to Zhao’s. This probably resulted from the fact that in the north, where political leadership changed more frequently, the issue of “loyalty” was more vital. On the other hand, the luxurious lifestyle of top officials in the south, which enjoyed enormous economic growth thanks to political stability, caught the attention of Song historians. A comprehensive comparison of these two figures might not only help us achieve a more detailed appreciation of the *Zeitgeist* of the period, but could also contribute to an expansion of our understanding of the subjective value judgments of Song historians. In this sense, the collection would have benefitted from the inclusion of one or more essays on comparative studies of a broader variety of topics, such as comparing archaeological findings of the period with that of the Tang or Song.

There is no doubt that *The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* is essential reading for scholars and students interested in tenth century China. More demanding readers may wish to consult other works, including Richard Davis’s translation of Ouyang Xiu’s *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties*, Naomi Standen’s *Unbounded Loyalty: Frontier Crossings in Liao China*, De-nin D. Lee’s *Night Banquet: A Chinese Scroll through Time*, and Johannes L. Kurz’s *China’s Southern Tang Dynasty, 937–976*. Certainly, none of these suggestions are meant to detract from the chapters as articles of exceptional quality, and it is for sure that this thought-provoking book offers many potentially interesting paths for further research.

1 See KUHN, Dieter, “Liao Architecture: Qidan Innovations and Han-Chinese Traditions.” *T’oung Pao* 86 (2000): 325–362.

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